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**\$100 million investment to help solar energy plan**

# Irish holding firm backs Imperial County plant

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A startup solar energy company with ambitious plans to generate electricity for San Diego said it has gained crucial financial backing for the project it has proposed in the Imperial Valley.

## MediaStrategies

Stirling Energy Systems, an Arizona startup company, has developed a "suncatcher" solar energy dish.

Under an agreement announced yesterday, Phoenix-based Stirling Energy Systems said it has landed a \$100 million investment from NTR, an international holding company in Dublin, Ireland.

The deal represents a needed boost in credibility for Stirling, which has come under fire from environmentalists who question Stirling's role in the 150-mile Sunrise Powerlink proposed by San Diego Gas & Electric Co.

Under an agreement with SDG&E, the Arizona startup with 40 employees plans to develop a power plant, consisting of 12,000 solar energy dishes, near El Centro at an estimated cost of \$400 million.

## Overview

**Background:** Stirling Energy Systems was founded in 1996 to develop solar energy technology that uses mirrors shaped into 38-foot dishes to concentrate the sun's heat to 1,300 degrees. The heat energy powers an engine, which uses thermodynamics to generate about 25 kilowatts of electricity, or enough to power 12 to 15 homes. The barrel-shaped engine requires no fuel or water and emits no exhaust.

**What's happening:** The first phase of Stirling's Imperial Valley project calls for building 12,000 solar dishes covering roughly three square miles. That would generate about 300 megawatts, or enough to power roughly 300,000 homes.

